

WASHINGTON D.C. – With unemployment rising to 9.6%, questions are mounting regarding the effectiveness of the stimulus bill and how stimulus dollars are being spent. Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA), the Ranking Member of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, has [sent a letter](#) to the Chairman of the Recovery Act Transparency and Accountability Board, Earl Devaney, regarding stimulus funding being steered for projects that “appear to violate the explicit prohibitions of the Recovery Act.”

Section 1604 of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (AARA) specifically prohibits funds from flowing to certain entertainment and recreation projects:

“Limit on Funds – None of the funds appropriated or otherwise made available in this Act may be used by any State or local government, or any private entity, for any casino or other gambling establishment, aquarium, zoo, golf course, or swimming pool.”

Furthermore, a Memorandum from the President to the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies issued on March 20, 2009 stated:

(a) Funds under the Recovery Act shall not be committed, obligated, or expended by any executive department or agency, and shall not be used by any State or local government or private grantee or awardee, to support projects of the type described in section 1604 of Division

A of the Recovery Act...”

“Despite the clear language of the Recovery Act and the subsequent effort by the White House to stress the importance of avoiding the use of stimulus funds for prohibited projects, taxpayer dollars were directed to entities legally barred from receiving them,” Issa wrote to Devaney. “In fact, stimulus money appears to have flowed to each and every type of project prohibited by Section 1604 of the AARA.”

- Casino: In February 2009, AARA funds were provided to students “at Fortune Bay Resort & Casino to get hands on experience in various departments within the resort and casino at our Career Expo Day.”

- Aquarium: In July 2009, AARA funds were awarded to Northwestern University for scientific research on fish. Part of the funding was used for “novel outreach projects (that) will expose the broader public to the results of research, including an art installation concerning the electric fields emitted by these fish and proposed enhancements to the electric fish displays of the Shedd Aquarium.”

- Zoo: In September of 2009, \$25 million in ARRA funds were awarded to the Smithsonian for projects including the “completion of various projects at the National Zoo.”

- Golf Course: AARA funds were awarded to the Forest Hills Golf Course through a U.S. Department of Education grant to the Oregon Department of Education. The award funds a program that allows students in Oregon's Forest Grove school district to use Forest Hills to learn to golf as part of the physical education curriculum.
- Swimming Pool: In July 2009, AARA funds were awarded to Northwestern University to provide "salary and wage compensation for individuals directly involved in AARA-funded projects" including "Pool Lifeguard."

"In addition to the projects that appear to violate the explicit prohibitions of the Recovery Act, there appear to be additional projects where stimulus funds have been spent on projects that violate the President's prohibition of the funding of 'impudent' projects," Issa wrote to Devaney. "These include stimulus funds spent on a waterpark, a bowling alley, a keg, beer and cigarette mart, a pet hotel, and a fraternity and sorority event."

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